

# THANK YOU

"My great hope is  
to laugh as much  
as I cry; to get my  
work done and try  
to love somebody  
& have the courage  
to accept the love  
in return."

Maya Angelou



The family of Sandra L. West is grateful for your kind words and comforting gestures. We've been shown such generosity and thoughtfulness during this difficult time, and it is deeply appreciated.

Ivy Patricia West & Ghana Imani Hylton

# A Celebration of Life Sandra L. West



Sunrise  
January 16, 1947  
Sunset  
February 14, 2019

Friday March 8, 2019 11:00 a.m.  
Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Montclair  
67 Church Street Montclair NJ 07042



Please feel free to eat & mingle before the program begins and afterwards

## PROGRAM

Welcome, Prayer  
& Opening Remarks

Ghana Imani Hylton  
(daughter)

Memories

Family & Dear Friends

A Look at a Life

Ghana Imani Hylton

Gratitude &  
Final Remarks

Ivy Patricia West  
(sister)



*Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom  
shall I send? Who will go for Us?" And I said,  
"Here am I. Send me!"*

*Isaiah 6:8*



## OBITUARY

**Sandra LaVonne West** was born on January 16, 1947 in Newark, NJ to Willie Andrew West and Ruby Ester Marie Jackson West, both now deceased.

Many years later in 1964, she graduated from Weequahic High School where she led the scholarship fund, and wrote for the *Calumet* newspaper and *Ergo* literary magazine. She also wrote poetry for *Davar*, the literary magazine of the YWHA located next door to Weequahic. She was Student Editor for the Weequahic community newspaper, edited by South Ward Councilman Lee Bernstein. At the age of 16, she had published her first short story about the freedom of black people, for *Cordette Literary Magazine for Teens* based in Chaska, Minnesota. As an adult member of Weequahic High School Alumni Association, she published *Libraries, Landmarks, Literacy*, a commemorative booklet of memories of Weequahic Branch Library written by Weequahic High Alumni, on the 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the branch in 2014.



In 1988 she graduated from Rutgers University-Newark where she received a Bachelor of Arts degree in English with a minor in African American Studies. She was a Dean's List student, editor of the *Freshman Orientation Handbook*, editor of the campus literary magazine, *Untitled*, for both day and night school, was co-chair of the *Black Historical and Cultural Society* for the night school, was a member of the *Black Organization of Faculty & Staff*, tutored West Side High School students as part of the EOF/Educational Opportunity Fund program, was editor of the *Black Organization of Students* newsletter, and was the first African-American editor of the campus newspaper, *The Observer*. She was a recipient of Rutgers' Leadership Development Society certificate. In 2000 she received a terminal degree: the Master of Fine Arts Degree in Creative Nonfiction from Goucher College in Baltimore, MD.





Sister West worked as a Journalist for the City of Newark's Information Newspaper during the historic administration of first Black mayor Kenneth A. Gibson in the late 1970s. She also worked as a Technical Writer for Montclair Board of Education, then as typesetter and Theatre Reviewer for Aquarian Newspaper. In Savannah, GA where she lived for 6 ½ years she worked as Assistant Editor for The Savannah Tribune, and as Staff Writer in Public Relations at Savannah State College/ University. In Richmond, VA where she spent an equal amount of time she taught English at Virginia Union University and at Virginia Commonwealth University, and wrote for both of their alumni magazines.

All the while, she free-lanced for magazines and newspapers such as Metro-Newark, Essence and Emerge and won an Honorable Mention for her short story, Boogie & Sarah Leigh, from Ebony Magazine. She wrote short stories for Obsidian Literary Magazine in North Carolina and for Savannah Literary Magazine, maintained a radio interview show on WSOU-FM in South Orange, NJ and won a Fellowship to the Virginia Creative Arts Center. She co-founded Newark Writers Collective, Inc., founded Frances E.W Harper Literary Society at Newark Public Library, founded W.E.B. DuBois Reading Circle at Newark Public Library, and was a member of the Harlem Writers Guild. Her book, Encyclopedia of the Harlem Renaissance (2003) won several honors including The New Jersey Center for the Book/New Jersey Notable Books 1995-2005. During the late 1980s, she inaugurated and edited an independent publication: Testimony: A Journal of African-American Poetry.

When she returned home to NJ in 2003, she worked as an Instructor at Rutgers, in the English and African-American Studies departments. She also worked at Newark Public Library where she initiated the Sandra L. West Book Collection (a collection of black classics at Weequahic Public Library), served as manager of the James Brown African American Room and curated the library's Black Studies programs.



The curated programs were Entrusted to Our Keeping: The Legacy of African-American Literary Societies in Newark, the Nation, the World (2008); Dear & Glorious Physician: The History of Black Doctors, Nurses and Hospitals in Newark and Places Just Beyond the River (2009); Fiat Justitia Let Justice Be Done: The History, Struggles, and Civil Rights Accomplishments of African-American Lawyers and Judges (2010); (continued on next page)

We Are A Dancing People: The History of Black Dance From Then Until Now (2011); We Wear The Mask: Black Theatre in Newark & Near From 1700s to 2012 (2012); and, From Bach to the Blues (2013). Her work as a librarian is archived in Librariana, Charles F. Cummings New Jersey Information Center of Newark Public Library.

Professor West served on the Advisory Board of Harlem Book Fair for several years; was a Judge for the book fair's Phillis Wheatley Book Awards; and was Event Director for Newark Book Festival starting in October 2015. She taught Harlem Renaissance 101 at The Adult School of Montclair, where she treated her students to her rendition of the Charleston. She was an avid theatre goer with decades-long membership in Elmart Theatre Services and Dr. Wadia's Theatre Group at Rutgers-Newark. She retired May 2015 with a Retirement From The World of Work Celebration Party at Appian Way in Orange, NJ. To celebrate not having to get up early in the mornings, she joined a Zumba class, worked with Nubian Heritage Quilters Guild, attended writing classes at The Adult School in Montclair, and dabbled in visual art.



At the age of 12, Sister West was baptized at St. James African Methodist Episcopal Church in Newark. She attended Sunday school; had poetry published in The Christian Endeavour; read poetry for the church's Brotherhood Week and Black History Month programs; sang in the Young Adult Choir; and served as an Usher during Palm Sunday's Fifty Little Girls in White program. As an adult she served as Public Relations Director; was a member of the St. James AME Federal Credit Union for 20 years; and sang in the Women's Day Choir. After returning home to New Jersey in 2003, she joined Bethany Baptist Church in 2004 where she became a member of the Black College Committee, the Book Club, Church Archives Committee, a Sunday school student, and President of the Black History Committee.



Ms. West was a community person. She was President of the Chadwick Avenue Block Association, inaugurated the West-Milton Neighborhood Garden on Chadwick Avenue and Hawthorne Place, was a member of two political action committees, Women for Ras Baraka and Council of Elders -- both during the historic mayoral tenure of Ras J. Baraka -- and was a member of the South Ward Police Community Relations Council. She received several awards and citations from Newark Municipal Council for her work.



Though she dearly loved and believed in Newark, she was fortunate enough to have seen a bit of the world. She traveled to Senegal, West Africa, Barbados, Bermuda, Spain, The Virgin Islands, Aruba, Bahamas, Haiti, Jamaica, Mexico, Brazil, Cuba, South Africa, in addition to Texas, New Hampshire, Mississippi and Chicago. Yet, her favorite place in the world was Harlem.

Sandra West married into the Whiteurs family and into the Vann family. Both marriages were dissolved. From her first marriage a child was born, baptized Ghana Jane Whiteurs now Ghana Imani Hylton.



### IMMEDIATE FAMILY

Ivy Patricia West Davis, *sister*  
William Hayes Davis, Jr., *nephew*

Ghana Imani Hylton and Wilfred Charles Hylton, *daughter and son-in-law*

Adanna Marcela Hylton, *granddaughter*

Zuri Andrew Hylton, *grandson*

Osaze Charles Hylton, *grandson*

### AUNTS, UNCLES, COUSINS, NEICES, NEPHEWS & SPECIAL LIFE-LONG FRIENDS

Clementine West Young and Waltin Young \* Paula Young Curry \*  
Derrick Curry \* Douglas Curry \* Marvin Young and Jacquetta Davis  
Young \* Eugene West \* Shirley West \* Cheryl West Freeman and  
Scott Freeman & Family \* Pamela West Halstead & Family \* Gregory  
McNeal West \* Elvirrah Deborah West \* Indy Medina West \* Delores  
West \* Adrian West \* Moses Errol Foy and Marjorie Foy \* Keith and  
Danielle Taylor \* Keith Taylor Jr. \* Elaina Taylor \* Marion Foy \*  
Jason and Karla Foy \* McKenzie Foy \* Seneca Foy \* Jonathan and  
Passion Foy \* Legend Foy \* True Foy \* Carolyn Jane Foy \* Theodore  
Foy \* John Edward Whiteurs \* Glenn Marshall Whiteurs \* June  
Barrett \* Christine Barrett \* Bruce and Felicia Perry \* Brandon Perry \*  
Barbara Ann Lofton & Family

Ernest King, Jr. and Ann King \* Juanita Gilbert \* Betty Robinson \* Reginald Turner

